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FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9927  
INFO AMEMBASSY YEREVAN IMMEDIATE  
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USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION UN ROME IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE  
NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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DEPT FOR EUR, S/CRS, PRM  
DEPT PLS PASS TO USAID  
USAID/W FOR A/AID HFORE; USAID/EE FOR ABREWER, RMAUSHAMMER;  
USAID/DCHA FOR MHESS  
DCHA/OFDA FOR KLUU, ACONVERY, DHAJJAR, MMICHAUD, GEORGIA COMPLEX  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANAGEMENT TEAM  
DCHA/FFP FOR RGRANT; DCHA/OTI FOR RJENKINS  
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH  
NSC FOR PMARCHAM  
BRUSSELS FOR JADDLETON  
NEW YORK FOR FSHANKS  
ROME FOR RNEWBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: USAID/DART GEORGIA COMPLEX EMERGENCY SITUATION REPORT #1

REF: TBILISI 1356; STATE 85957

SUMMARY

1. In early August, heightened tension led to armed conflict involving Georgian and Russian armed forces and a South Ossetian separatist group, affecting populations along the Georgia-Russia border and areas within Georgia, including South Ossetia, parts of Abkhazia, and the town of Gori. While clashes between the parties have largely ceased since an August 12 ceasefire, tensions remain high in South Ossetia Region, Abkhazia, in and around Gori town in Shida Kartli Region, and in Poti port. The fighting displaced more than 128,000 civilians and reportedly led to the deaths of hundreds of people.

2. In response to the crisis, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) to Tbilisi, Georgia, to conduct humanitarian needs assessments and coordinate with the Government of Georgia (GOG) and relief agencies.

3. The USAID/DART notes that limits on access to all affected populations, including in South Ossetia Region, present challenges for humanitarian service delivery and needs prioritization. In addition, the proliferation of centers for internally displaced persons (IDPs) presents challenges for coordination of the response. The USAID/DART continues to work with relief agencies and U.S. Government agencies in Georgia to provide needed assistance to conflict-affected populations. End summary.

NUMBER OF IDPS

4. According to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the conflict in Georgia has displaced an estimated 128,700 individuals in Georgia, and the Government of the Russian Federation (GORF) reports that approximately 30,000 individuals were displaced from South Ossetia into Russia during the clashes.

¶15. On August 19, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) noted that approximately 100,000 pre-existing internally displaced persons (IDPs) were living in more than 1,600 collective centers before conflict erupted in August and provided estimates that more than 550 IDP centers have opened in Tbilisi alone since the crisis began.

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SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS  
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¶16. As of August 19, international media report no significant signs of Russian troops withdrawing from Georgia, despite an agreement to pull back to pre-conflict areas beginning August 18. The security situation remains tense, particularly in South Ossetia, Gori, and Abkhazia. Humanitarian agencies remain unable to access South Ossetia Region, where much of the fighting occurred. According to OCHA, no humanitarian agencies have undertaken a full assessment mission or assistance operations in South Ossetia to date, with access remaining sporadic.

¶17. As security has improved in Gori, multiple relief agencies have made preliminary damage assessments of Gori town and surrounding areas. Despite media reports that Gori sustained critical damage to most or all dwellings, the assessments indicate that 10 to 15 residential buildings in Gori town that previously housed 300-500 individuals are heavily damaged, and approximately 30 percent of houses in Gori town sustained window damage.

¶18. In Gori Region, a non-governmental organization (NGO) assessment team reported that at least 15 to 20 percent of homes are damaged and 2 to 3 percent are completely destroyed, affecting 2,000-10,000 households. Community members in shelters for displaced persons are reluctant to return to communities in the near future but have considered the possibility of returning to Gori town.

¶19. Although a damaged rail line between Gori and Tbilisi has temporarily halted rail transit, humanitarian travel is beginning to flow on the major east-west highway across the country, allowing the distribution of humanitarian relief to Gori and as far west as Poti, along the Black Sea. The USAID/DART notes the need for unimpeded access to affected populations, as full humanitarian assessments are necessary for prioritization of assistance. The USAID/DART is working with NGO and U.N. partners to facilitate information-sharing regarding planned assessments and humanitarian needs.

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FOOD AID  
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¶110. As of August 18, the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) had reached 114,500 beneficiaries in Georgia. WFP is providing IDPs with wheat flour, vegetable oil, beans, salt, sugar, high-energy biscuits, and baked bread. Since access to cooking facilities remains a challenge for IDP populations in some urban IDP collection centers, the U.S. Government (USG) has provided ready-to-eat food (RUF) and high-energy biscuits to IDP populations in the Tbilisi and Gori areas. U.S. European Command (EUCOM) flights of USG meals-ready-to-eat (MREs) and humanitarian daily rations (HDRs) are ongoing.

¶111. According to WFP, regular humanitarian convoys into Gori and surrounding villages began on August 18, with a consignment of 2,500 10-day rations, including wheat flour, oil, and sugar, to the village of Arteni, south of Gori, where an estimated 10,000 former Gori inhabitants have reportedly taken refuge.

¶112. On August 19, WFP moved its first convoy since the start of the crisis from the port of Poti to Tbilisi. The convoy consisted of 11 trucks transporting 220 metric tons (MT) of wheat flour. The establishment of the route provides a critical pipeline of commodities, including food aid, toward eastern Georgia following the destruction of the rail line linking the Black Sea and eastern Georgia.

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HEALTH  
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¶13. USAID/Georgia and USAID/DART staff note that the proliferation of IDP collective centers, with numerous people living in close proximity, could pose future health risks. USAID/Georgia has provided \$62,944 to World Vision/Georgia to provide health activities in six IDP collective centers in Tbilisi. The health activities, which will be staffed by one nurse and one psychologist, will provide basic medical and psycho-social support to residents of the six centers on a daily basis.

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USG RESPONSE TO DATE  
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¶14. The USG has provided more than USD 8.2 million to date in response to the crisis. On August 9, U.S. Ambassador John F. Tefft declared a disaster due to the effects of armed conflict in Georgia, and USAID/OFDA provided an initial USD 250,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi for the provision of emergency relief supplies to benefit up to 10,000 people. In addition, USAID/OFDA, in coordination with USAID's Office of Food for Peace, provided USD 1 million to WFP for local procurement of more than 650 MT of emergency food commodities, including high-energy biscuits, for displaced people who lack access to cooking facilities. Distributions of WFP food in Gori began on August 15.

¶15. U.S. Embassy Tbilisi has released Department of State pre-positioned disaster packages including medical supplies, tents, blankets, bedding, hygiene items, and clothing valued at USD 1.2 million. As of August 19, EUCOM had delivered 15 flights of USG relief and medical supplies to Tbilisi to benefit populations affected by the conflict. The total value of EUCOM's assistance, including DOD emergency relief supplies, is more than USD 3.8 million.

¶16. USAID/OFDA continues to work closely with USAID/Georgia, the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy Tbilisi, Department of Defense, and humanitarian agencies on the ground to coordinate relief activities.

TEFFT